

and a scarcity of good winter feed. When the disastrous storms of the 1886-1887 winter hit, tremendous numbers of the unprotected and drifting cattle froze or starved to death. Partly because of the efforts of the herders, and partly because of the flockowners being prepared for some supplemental feeding, the woollie flocks were much less affected by the severe winter. For a number of years subsequent to the Big Freeze, therefore, there was substantially less pressure on the ranges and the struggle between the sheepherders and the cowboys became a moot point.

As the last decade of the nineteenth century began the complaints against the flockowners again began to surface. Even in Utah, which experienced very little violence in the struggle for the range, articles appeared which declared that sheep were destroying the range "for cattle and are a nuisance generally to everybody except the tariff protected owners of the sheep. There seems to be no protection for Wasatch county people against sheep, unless they protect themselves." The article went on to state that "common decency and respect for the right of others should induce them to take their sheep at least far enough away from the settlements so as not to eat out the cow range. The tariff protects the wool, but may not

protect the sheep."<sup>1</sup> As the market for cattle improved, the banked bed of coals of the struggle for the range again began to flare up.

Early in 1894 the smoldering struggle between the cattlemen and sheepmen of the Henry's Fork (Wyoming) area burst into flame. Tension between the competitors for the grazing lands had been developing for some time, and it erupted when William Summers and eighteen of his friends decided to remove the sheepmen from the Henry's Fork range. Sheepmen were warned out of the area and two ranchers, Blake and Beckstead, were even driven off their own ranch.<sup>2</sup> According to the cattlemen, the sheep had badly beaten down the range which had forced those owning cattle to

sell or seek a new range, and now at last they are crowded to the foothills of the Uintahs on Henry's Fork and the sheepmen are still after them. The sheepmen say they have just as good a right to this range as the first settlers. Of course under our laws they have, but when it comes to rights existing between man and man they have not.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the fact that the sheepmen under the law had as much

<sup>1</sup> Wasatch Wave, April 20, 1889.

<sup>2</sup> News Register (Evanston, Wyoming), Jan. 27, 1894.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Jan. 27, 1894.

right to utilize the public domain as did the latter established a deadline over which sheep cross.

The beleaguered sheepmen met to consider the cowmen. In answer to the deadline, the Association passed a resolution which stated that

while we do not believe in or justify herding of sheep at or near private ranches, still we are determined to enforce our rights to free and unrestricted range upon the public domain and with that end in view this association will assist, aid and defend member hereof in the full and complete enjoyment of his rights within the

Although the flockowners' indignation was stilled by protestations of willingness to help those who were deprived of their lawful rights were sincere, the minority and public feeling in most instances was unappeasable. William Bachelder clearly stated that he wrote that "in the early days a sheepman was never elected to office on any ticket."<sup>2</sup> As the Association grew, more and more deadlines were laid upon the sheepmen.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., May 19, 1894.

<sup>2</sup>Letter, William Bachelder to Ansel Watrous, quoted in Watrous, History of Larimer County

Brought to RRGreen by  
James Beckstead who is  
writing a book on The  
Cattle barons of Utah Aug 1987